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Indian captain Suryakumar Yadav

Pakistan skipper Salman Agha

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BLOCKBUSTER INDIA-PAK FINAL AT T20 ASIA CUP TOURNEY TODAY

Men in Blue take on arch rivals in the T20 Asia Cup final in Dubai today. This will be their first-ever meeting at this stage of the competition...

TIME FOR CRICKET TO TAKE CENTRE STAGE

The controversies, largely non-cricketing, between India and Pakistan have been the biggest talking point of the tournament. India refused to shake hands with the Pakistan team. The reactions from either side since has only added to the prevailing tensions. Under pressure, both teams will look to hold their nerves and focus on playing good cricket

EMOTIONS RUNNING HIGH ON BOTH SIDES

- India have maintained that they are there to play cricket, but the Super 4s match showed how much it matters to them
- On the eve of the final, Pakistan captain Salman Agha said that every individual has the right to express emotions. "I won't stop anyone as long as it is not disrespectful," he said.

MORE ON P13

Eight

THE NUMBER OF ASIA CUP TITLES INDIA HAVE WON

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

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EXPRESS INTAKE

Rift between Siddu, DKS shows up in nominations to posts | P4

Keep 'looter' Cong out: Modi at Odisha rally | P5

Ambulances pass by the crowd at Vijay's rally as the leader looks on from atop his bus in Karur on Saturday | EXPRESS

39 KILLED IN VIJAY RALLY STAMPEDE

D VINCENT AROCKIARAJ @ Karur

AT least 39 people, including eight children and 16 women, died following a stampede and crowd surge during Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) leader Vijay's election campaign at Veluchamipuram in Karur on Saturday evening.

At least 50 more are under treatment at various hospitals across the city. The death toll may rise as a few of them are critical. Chief Minister M K Stalin has left for Tiruchy on a flight late on Saturday. He will reach Karur by road.

Stalin, who convened a meeting of top state officials at the secretariat to review the situation late on Saturday, said a commission of inquiry headed by Justice Aruna Jagadeesan will probe the stampede. The state has also announced a compensation of ₹10 lakh each to families of the victims, and ₹1 lakh each to those admitted with critical injuries.

As per sources, the stampede broke out in the evening, around 7.30 pm, just as Vijay was addressing the huge crowd that was waiting for hours to get a glimpse of him. The crowd soon swelled and became uncontrollable, and a number of persons including party workers and a few children fainted and fell down in the crowd.

According to a few eyewitnesses that *TNIE* spoke to, the power supply was disrupted and lights went out due to the pushing and jostling in the crowd. With the loudspeakers also failing, people moved closer to hear Vijay speak. In the process, they pushed one another, causing several to fall, which led to the tragedy, they said.

President Droupadi Murmu, PM Narendra Modi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other leaders expressed condolences. Meanwhile, the Union Home Ministry has sought a report from the Tamil Nadu government on the stampede. Home Minister Amit Shah also spoke to Governor R N Ravi and Stalin to take stock of the situation and assured all possible central help.

Vijay, who avoided talking to the waiting media at both the Tiruchy and Chennai airports, later took to 'X' to share his views on the matter. "My heart has broken, I am in unbearable, inexplicable pain and grief," he said. The actor added he prayed for speedy recovery of those being treated in hospitals. P5

Pak epicentre of global terror, says Jaishankar

India will continue to maintain freedom of choice, minister tells UN

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar termed Pakistan as the "the epicentre of global terrorism" and demanded "relentless pressure" on the ecosystem that enables cross-border terror in his address to the United Nations General Assembly on Saturday.

"We have a neighbour that is the epicentre of terrorism," Jaishankar said, referring to Pakistan without naming it, and referenced the recent Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed the lives of 26 civilians. "Terror hubs operate at an industrial scale, terrorists are publicly glorified, and financing of terrorism continues unabated," he said.

Opening his speech with "Namaskar from the people of Bharat," Jaishankar said that India will continue to maintain its freedom of choice and act as a leading voice of the Global South. "While asserting our rights, we must also firmly face up to threats. Countering terrorism is a particular priority. Those who condone it today will face its consequences tomorrow," he warned.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar speaks at the UN General Assembly | PTI

Jaishankar also took aim at the paralysis within the UN system, saying the world body was in a "state of crisis". "As the UN's ability to forge common ground diminishes, belief in multilateralism also recedes. We must ask ourselves: has the UN lived up to the expectations of its member states?"

He reiterated India's long-standing call for comprehensive reforms in the UN, especially the Security Council, stating that "most member states strongly desire change" to reflect contemporary realities.

On the economic front, Jaishankar flagged the risks posed by rising "tariff volatility and uncertain market access", a veiled reference to recent US tariffs targeting Indian exports, including penalties linked to India's energy ties with Russia. "De-risking has become a major compulsion for developing economies," he said, underlining the uneven playing field and calling for trade policies free from "non-market factors".

Jaishankar also addressed the shifting geopolitical landscape, referring to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza as the two major active conflicts, but noted that "innumerable other hotspots don't even make the news". "Bharat will always maintain its freedom of choice," he said, "and will continue to be the voice of the Global South."

Earlier in the day, India rebutted Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's remarks on Operation Sindoor, calling them "absurd theatrics", accusing Islamabad of glorifying terror on a global platform. P9

Police now looking at possible Pakistan links of Wangchuk, says DGP

FAYWAZ WANI @ Srinagar

CLIMATE activist and Magsaysay awardee Sonam Wangchuk, who was arrested on Friday in connection with the Leh violence, is being investigated for alleged links to Pakistan and violation of foreign funding rules, Ladakh Director General of Police S D Singh Jamwal said on Saturday.

Sonam Wangchuk

Wangchuk is accused of being a key instigator in the Leh violence, in which four persons were killed and 80 others injured. "We recently arrested a Pakistani intelligence operative who sent videos of Wangchuk's speeches across the border," Jamwal said, adding that the operative was also in contact with Wangchuk.

"His speech acted as incitement, as he referred to the Arab Spring and the recent unrest in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka," Jamwal said. The DG also referred to Sonam's recent visits to Pakistan and Bangladesh.

"He attended an event organised by *The Dawn* in Pakistan and also visited Bangladesh," Jamwal said.

The police are also probing Wangchuk's foreign funding. "There is an investigation into foreign funding and violation of FCRA regulations against him," Jamwal said.

Curfew in violence-hit Leh was relaxed in the afternoon in a phased manner for a few hours. Wangchuk's arrest and the way the the situation was handled drew criticism from all Opposition parties.

EXPRESS READ

Bengaluru-Mumbai superfast train coming soon

Bengaluru: The Ministry of Railways has approved a new superfast train between Bengaluru and Mumbai, said Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya on Saturday. The service, to be launched soon, would provide a faster and more affordable travel option between the two economic hubs | P2

Seafood: India eyes global certification

New Delhi: To countervail the impact of unilateral tariffs imposed by the US, India is planning to seek global certification for its seafood. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification could fetch premium prices — up to 30% higher than earlier | P10

Nationwide cyber fraud ring busted in Guj

Ahmedabad: A multi-crore online betting and stock market fraud disguised as an e-commerce business has been busted in Surat. The crackdown exposed a ₹20.08 crore racket spread across 43 bank accounts, with links stretching from Gujarat to Maharashtra | P10

Corruption has doubled, contractors' assn tells CM

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KARNATAKA State Contractors' Association (KSCA) has alleged that the rate of corruption under the Congress-ruled state government has almost doubled compared to the previous BJP regime.

The association, in a hard-hitting letter dated September 25, addressed to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, said that KSCA fought against corruption and that it was also instrumental in helping the Congress to come to power.

KSCA President R Manjunath and General Secretary GM Ravindra, who signed the letter, alleged that the government has failed to clear the long-pending dues of contractors for nearly two years.

The charges in the letter could come as a setback and major embarrassment to the state government, as the Congress ran an aggressive campaign against then BJP government with its 'PayCM' and '40 per cent commission sarkara' campaigns, which dented the BJP's chances of retaining power in the state assembly elections in 2023.

"When you (Siddaramiah) were the leader of the opposition, you had said that no commission would be asked to clear bills if your (Congress) party comes to power. However, we regret to inform you that compared to the previous government, the commission has doubled in eight departments that execute projects," Majunath said in the letter. CONTINUED ON: P5

CBI raids 12 builders in B'luru, Kolkata and Mumbai

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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IN a major crackdown on builders allegedly involved in cheating and defrauding thousands of home-buyers, the CBI on Saturday conducted nationwide searches at 12 locations in Bengaluru, Kolkata and Mumbai after registering six cases against builders and officials of financial institutions for allegedly cheating and defrauding homebuyers, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) stated in an official release.

Some unknown officials of various financial institutions are also under the agency's scanner. "Various incriminating documents and some digital electronic evidence have been seized during the ongoing searches," stated the CBI spokesperson.

Four out of the six cases are to do with companies that are either registered in Bengaluru or have a project in the city.

According to the CBI, the six companies against which it has registered cases, three -- Ithaca Estate Pvt Ltd, LGCL Urban Homes (India) LLP and Ozone Urbana Infra Developers Pvt Ltd -- have registered offices in Bengaluru, while Shashwati Realty Pvt Ltd has a registered office in Mumbai and a project in Bengaluru. The other two -- MKHS Housing LLP is from Kolkata and Acme Realties Pvt Ltd is from Mumbai.

The development follows the apex court's order in July, when it allowed the CBI to file 22 cases into these allegations. P5

CM on city rounds finds debris, potholes

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah's event-filled Bengaluru rounds led him to lose his cool several times and order the suspension of an engineer on Saturday. His inspection of the capital city, along with ministers and officials, came after days of complaints by people, who are frustrated with the condition of roads and other infrastructure issues.

He warned new commissioners and chief engineers of the five city corporations falling under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) that they should fix potholes by October-end or face action.

Seeing the condition of Hennur-Bagalur road, which falls under the Bengaluru North City Corporation, Siddaramaiah flew into a rage and said the assistant executive engineer (AEE) attached to the Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Limited (BSMILE) should be suspended.

He found that potholes were covered with just gravel and no tar on them.

CONTINUED ON: P2

Residents perform pooja to a pothole in Bengaluru on Saturday | KEVIN NASHON